

## **SHERIFF DAVID N. FAVRO, CLINTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE - OFFERS BICYCLE SAFETY TIPS**

May is National Bicycle Safety Month. Bicycle riding is a fun, healthy activity when everyone takes the time to be informed about safety. Bicycles are considered vehicles in New York State, and cyclists have the same rights and the same responsibilities to follow the rules of the road as motorists. Sheriff Favro provides the following safety tips to help all of our citizens, particularly our children, to be safe on the roads.

### **Equipment/Clothing**

- **Wear a Properly Fitted Bicycle Helmet.** Bicyclist's 14 years old and younger are required to wear a helmet when operating a bicycle. (Erie and Rockland counties require everyone to wear a helmet.)
- **Use a bicycle that is properly equipped.** New York State Law requires a warning bell or horn, coaster brake, reflective devices on front and rear wheels, sides and pedals.
- **Use lights at night.** New York law requires a white headlight (visible from at least 500 feet ahead) and a red rear reflector or taillight (visible up to 300 feet from behind) for riding at night.
- **Keep your bike in good repair.** Adjust your bike to fit you and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly. Routine maintenance is simple and you can learn to do it yourself.
- **Wear bright colored clothing,** preferably neon, fluorescent, or other bright colors whenever riding. Also wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings.

### **General Safety**

- **Control Your Bicycle.** Always ride with at least one hand on the handlebars. Carry books and other items in a bicycle carrier or backpack. Keep both hands ready to brake.
- **Be on the lookout for hazards** such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, and dogs. All these hazards can cause a crash.
- **Never operate a bicycle wearing headphones,** talking on a cell phone or text messaging - stop your bicycle when sending or receiving a cell phone call or text message.
- **Sit on the bike seat, keep feet on the pedals, and never carry a passenger** on a bike unless it's a child in an approved safety seat. New York State Law requires it.
- **Make eye contact with drivers.** Assume that other drivers don't see you until you are sure that they do. Eye contact is important with any driver who might pose a threat to your safety.

### **Rules of the Road**

The safest place for bicycle riding is on the street, where you should ride in the same direction as motorists. Children less than 10 years old, however, are not mature enough to safely ride in the street.

**Children under 10** should generally ride on the sidewalk. For all others:

- **Go with the traffic flow.** New York State Law requires bicycles to ride as close to the right side of the road as you safety can, in the same direction as other vehicles. Go with the flow.

- **Obey All Traffic Laws.** A bicycle is a vehicle and you're a driver. When you ride in the street, obey all traffic signs, signals, and lane markings. New York State Law requires it.
- **Be Predictable.** Ride in a straight line, not in and out of cars. Signal your moves to others.
- **Watch for Parked Cars.** Ride far enough out from the curb to avoid the unexpected from parked cars (like doors opening or cars pulling out).
- **Use hand signals.** New York State Law requires use of hand signals to tell motorists and pedestrians what you intend to do. Signal as a matter of law, of courtesy and of self-protection.
- **Look Before Turning.** When turning left or right, always look behind you for a break in traffic, then signal before making the turn. Watch for left or right-turning traffic.
- **Choose the best way to turn left.** There are two choices: (1) Like an automobile: signal to move into the left turn lane and then turn left. (2) Like a pedestrian: ride straight to the far side crosswalk. Walk your bike across.
- **Don't pass on the right.** Motorist's may not look for nor see a bicycle passing on the right.

Young children between the ages of 10 and 14 are at the highest risk of injury on a bicycle. Review these safety guidelines with your children. Look for a bicycle safety event to participate in this spring. And watch out for children when you are driving. If we all take the time to review these laws and tips, we can all ride...and drive....safer this spring!

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